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Speaking Notes

The Honourable Anne McLellan
Minister of Justice and
Attorney General of Canada

Convention of the Barreau du Québec

Mont Tremblant, Quebec
June 1, 2000

As-delivered

Thank you Monsieur le Bâtonnier for your kind introduction.

Mr. Justice LeBel; Madam Justice l'Heureux-Dubé; the Honourable Chief Justice of Quebec; distinguished guests; fellow colleagues.

I am very happy to participate once again this year in the annual convention of the Barreau du Québec.

The 2000 convention of the Barreau du Québec is an excellent opportunity to focus on its dynamism and its plans for the future.

It seems to me that there are two things about the practice of law in Quebec that give you some real advantages in meeting the challenges of the future.

First, the ability of many of your members to work in both official languages is an asset in an increasingly interdependent world.

Secondly, the familiarity of your members with both civil and common law traditions and the ability to make them coexist effectively are an important competitive advantage that you possess.

A further element which positions you well for the future is the leadership and dedication of those who have served as Bâtonnier.

In this regard, I would like to say a few words about the important work of the outgoing Bâtonnier, Maître Denis Jacques. He fulfilled his duties with passion, determination and vision.

During his term, Maître Jacques was directly involved in the issues facing the profession and the Barreau. These issues include legal aid insurance, Éducaloi, the legal information network as well as making research tools accessible to members of the Barreau du Québec.

In this fast-paced world, the Barreau's commitment to helping its members embrace technological change deserves mention. During the past year, under the leadership of its Bâtonnier, the Barreau laid the groundwork for achieving this goal. One example is the Recueil électronique de

jurisprudence du Barreau, to which members have free access for a year. Thank you, Maître Jacques, for putting your considerable talents at the service of our profession.

I must mention the close cooperation between the Barreau du Québec and the Department of Justice of Canada in a number of areas, including cooperation in legislative matters. Our two institutions sometimes have differing points of view. This is a normal and healthy relationship and one that I value.

Working in the interests of justice, the Barreau du Québec prepares well thought out proposals that enable us to offer comprehensive policies and programs to Canadians. Our work on Bill C-3: Youth Criminal Justice Act is a good example of that.

I was particularly impressed by the detailed report on Bill C-3 that the Barreau du Québec presented to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights. Many of your comments and suggestions were incorporated in the amendments to the Bill that the government submitted to the Standing Committee.

I hope that, with the Government of Quebec and all the other stakeholders, we will be able to improve the justice system so that it better meets the needs of youth. Rather than changing this approach, this bill should strengthen it.

I know that we are all waiting for the ceremony that will follow my remarks. The Barreau du Quebec's medal will be awarded shortly to one of our distinguished colleagues, Mr. Justice Louis LeBel, for his outstanding contribution to the advancement and practice of law.

I am happy to repeat what I said at the swearing-in ceremony for Mr. Justice LeBel to the Supreme Court of Canada. The legal community regards Mr. Justice LeBel as an exceptional jurist. His scholarship, strong intellectual abilities, hard work and exemplary conduct on the bench have earned him the respect of his peers.

Mr. Justice LeBel has excelled in every role he has had — lawyer, professor, author, judge. Mr. Justice LeBel, please accept my sincerest congratulations on this well-deserved honour.

To conclude, I would like to offer my best wishes for success to the new Bâtonnier, Maître Ronald Montcalm, and the vice-president Maître François Gervais. I know that we will work well together.

I hope you have a good convention this year. Thank you for your attention.

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